



ROAD TO CITIZENSHIP OVERVIEW

In the twelve months from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, Nations Ministry Center assisted **386 refugees file new applications for citizenship, green cards, and family immigration, with 121 receiving green cards and 78 becoming US citizens.** COVID has dramatically slowed the process, but we are delighted that so many made it through the system even during these challenging times.

These refugees came from Nepal, Burundi, Bhutan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Egypt, Congo, and Myanmar and had arrived in the US only after first waiting in refugee camps, being thoroughly vetted at an US Embassy, and then waiting for their turn to be allowed into the United States. Refugees are allowed to work in the United States when they arrive but can only become permanent residents by first residing in the US for one year and then applying for a green card, also called adjusting status. The overwhelming majority of those seeking help from Nations Ministry Center are struggling with English and not able to navigate US Citizenship and Immigration Services forms and procedures. All the required forms and applications can be expensive to these new immigrants struggling in their first US jobs and raising families. By filing fee waivers allowed by the US immigration services, **Nations Ministry Center helped the 386 refugee applicants to save \$279,045 in filing fees and another \$37,200 in preparation fees.** Even after our initial help with filing immigration applications many refugees need ongoing assistance with scheduling or rescheduling immigration appointments, sending requested documents or other evidence, and phoning and emailing the USCIS for responses to difficult to understand letters.

STORIES

Typically, D. Mang arrived in the US as refugee from Burma with her husband with almost no knowledge of English. She raised her children and worked at Under Armour while trying to improve her English skills. After five years of living in the United States D. Mang was eligible to apply for citizenship. She failed her first and second interviews and then reapplied. After a few months she was called in for another interview in which she passed the civics and history questions as well as the reading and writing requirement, but “failed on English skills.” D. Mang contacted Nations Ministry Center and requested help in passing this last hurdle to her citizenship. She attended practice sessions and received coaching on answering difficult oral questions from her application. Each session D. Mang took notes, completed assignments, and came back more prepared. In September of this year with renewed confidence and knowledge D. Mang passed her final naturalization interview and then took her oath as a new US citizen.

For refugees like D. Mang and others seeking intensive study and preparation Nations Ministry Center provides both individualized interview coaching and small group classes of three to seven students. These classes emphasize repeated practice with interview

questions asked by USCIS officers along with coaching on how to listen for key words and best appropriate responses. The small classes allow for addressing each student's specific challenges while providing the structure and reinforcement of group learning. Students download a customized audio application on their phones to practice between classes and attend for up to eight weeks, depending on their skill level and needs. In some cases we accompany citizenship applicants to their interviews as accredited immigration representatives.

AFGHANISTAN HUMANITARIAN PAROLEE SUPPORT

Recently, Afghan immigrants living in Nashville and even outside of Tennessee have contacted Nations Ministry Center to help relatives desperate to escape the Taliban in Afghanistan. Most of the Afghans seeking help in getting their families out of danger have worked for or with the US government as translators or support staff. They have extended families of parents, siblings, and nephews and nieces hiding in Kabul afraid to answer a phone call or a knock at the door. For those now dealing with the required array of documents and guidelines, we are providing training sessions in applying for humanitarian parole, using fee waivers, and gathering documents as well as reviewing and editing completed documents. We search for and share the latest requirement updates and immigration attorney guidelines to help Afghans in Nashville needing to get their families out of danger. Currently, we are assisting to get 51 of these family members from Afghanistan and into the United States.